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SUBJECT: Fuzhou Hospital Struggles With Drug-Resistant TB and Migrant Patients

¶11. (U) SUMMARY: Fuzhou Lung Diseases Hospital emphasizes increased training and public education to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. The growing drug-resistance of infectious diseases, particularly tuberculosis, and the large number of migrant patients continue to challenge prevention and treatment efforts. Local governments in Fujian are supportive of the hospital's efforts and understand the importance of infectious disease control, according to health officials. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (U) Congenoff visited Fuzhou Lung Diseases Hospital on May 18. It is Fujian's only hospital specifically designated for the treatment and prevention of respiratory diseases. Approximately half of its patients are from Fuzhou municipality, while the remaining patients come from rural areas. In addition to providing comprehensive outpatient medical services, the hospital has ten specialized sections for different types of respiratory diseases. The hospital focuses primarily on tuberculosis (TB) and lung cancer. Hospital administrators claim to have all the advanced equipment needed for testing and diagnosis of respiratory diseases, including CT, color B-mode ultrasound imaging, and advanced diagnostic laboratory equipment. The 355-bed facility employs about 420 staff, over 100 of which hold advanced degrees. The Hospital was built in 1952 and is affiliated with Fujian Medical University.

Drug resistance and migrant patients

¶13. (U) TB is one of the major focal points of the hospital's prevention efforts. According to hospital administrators, China is one of 22 countries with a "serious" TB problem. Growing drug-resistance and China's large migrant population are significant obstacles as doctors have difficulty finding appropriate antibiotics to treat drug-resistant TB and in tracking their migrant patients. Research into more effective treatment methods remains a priority.

Government efforts on infectious disease control

¶14. (U) Dr. Yang, Chief of the TB Prevention Section, told us that the local government is supportive of the hospital's infectious respiratory disease prevention efforts. The Fuzhou Municipal Government has formed a TB prevention working group. Fuzhou is also one of the few governments that have established local regulations on this issue. In 2005, Fuzhou started to provide free medical care for TB patients who meet certain government criteria. The hospital has assigned the primary responsibility for infectious diseases

control to one of its vice presidents. It has also established a reward and penalty mechanism for infectious diseases reporting. Although the hospital is state-owned, it still requires other funding and what it gets from provincial and municipal governments is not sufficient to cover operating expenses. The hospital charges most patients for their medical care based on price levels approved by the Fujian Provincial Government's Pricing Bureau.

15. (U) Zheng Boxun, Deputy Director of the Fujian Health Bureau's International Medical Exchange Center, added that the central government maintains a strong CDC network for infectious disease monitoring and emergency reaction to public health incidents. Zheng said that this network was strengthened after the SARS crisis. Hospitals play an increasingly important role as part of the disease reporting network. According to Zheng, the local government has devoted more resources to educating the public about infectious diseases, so that people will not panic when an outbreak occurs.

More emphasis on training and staff quality

16. (U) Since the SARS crisis, the hospital has made on-the-job training mandatory to ensure that staff can better recognize various infectious diseases and take appropriate protective measures. Hospital officials also send their staff to other hospitals around the country to learn best practices.

17. (U) The hospital has no difficulty recruiting new staff. The hospital's party secretary, Ms. You, said they understand that quality medical staff is key to the hospital's success. Competition is fierce for medical staff positions at the hospital, according to Ms. You, who added that there are usually at least six applicants for each position, three of whom are chosen for an interview.

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Comment

18. (SBU) Local governments are paying more attention to public health, as it influences China's economic development and social stability. Health officials are focusing more on infectious disease control by strengthening the reporting network, training medical staff, and providing free treatment to some patients. However, Chinese officials need to improve their transparency in information sharing with the international community.

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